

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (withdrawn): Method to facilitate the filling of a vertical tube (1) with the aid of a solid material in a particulate state, of the type in which the particles move down in the tube (1) as a result of gravity and encounter obstacles (5) along the their path, where said obstacles are supported by at least one cable or similar device that is suspended vertically in the tube, where this method is characterized by the fact that during their fall in the tube, the particles encounter at least three obstacles (5) that are at least in part offset laterally in relation to the axis of the tube, and where at least two of these obstacles (5) are arranged in the tube at different levels, where the largest dimension of the obstacles (5), perpendicularly to the axis of the related cable, ranges between 0.25 and 0.75 times the diameter of the tube (1) and said obstacles (5) take up at least 80% of the lateral section of the tube.

2. (withdrawn): Method as set forth in claim 1, characterized by the fact that the obstacles (5) are made of a flexible material, capable of cushioning the chock of the particles, with a damping factor greater than 0.15 and preferably greater than 0.2 at room temperature and at a frequency of 31 Hz.

3. (withdrawn): Method as set forth in claim 1, characterized by the fact that, as the tube (1) fills up, the cables (4) are brought up more or less in synchronization toward the upper portion of the tube (1).

4. (currently amended): Device to facilitate the filling of a vertical tube (1) with ~~the aid of a~~ solid material in a particulate state, ~~that~~ wherein the solid material moves down in the tube (1) as a result of gravity, ~~of the type that contains~~ the device comprising at least one cable or similar device that is suspended vertically in the tube, ~~where this device is characterized by the~~

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~~fact that it contains~~ and at least three obstacles (5) that are at least in part offset laterally in relation to the axis of the tube,

wherein at least two of these obstacles (5) are arranged in the tube at different levels,

wherein the largest dimension of the obstacles (5), perpendicularly to the axis of their related support, ranges between 0.25 and 0.75 times the diameter of the tube (1), and

wherein said obstacles (5) take up at least 80% of the lateral section of said tube.

5. (withdrawn): Device as set forth in claim 4, characterized by the fact that at least two cables (14) are connected by at least one brace (16).

6. (previously presented): Device as set forth in claim 4, characterized by the fact that the obstacles (5) are arranged more or less symmetrically in relation to the axis of the tube.

7. (previously presented): Device as set forth in claim 4, characterized by the fact that at least some of the obstacles (5) have a rotational symmetry and that their symmetry axis coincides with the axis of their related support.

8. (previously presented): Device as set forth in claim 4, characterized by the fact that at least some of the obstacles (23) have a rotational symmetry and that their symmetry axis is offset in relation to the cable (4).

9. (previously presented): Device as set forth in claim 7, characterized by the fact that the obstacles (5) have a spherical, hemispherical, conical, tronconical or cylindrical shape.

10. (withdrawn): Device as set forth in claim 4, characterized by the fact that the obstacles (5) are made of a flexible material, with a damping factor at room temperature and at a frequency of 31 Hz, that is greater than 0.15 and preferably greater than 0.2.

11. (withdrawn): Device as set forth in claim 10, characterized by the fact that the obstacles (5) are made of an elastomer or an alveolar material.

12. (withdrawn): Device as set forth in claim 11, characterized by the fact that the flexible material is an isobutylene butyl rubber.

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13. (withdrawn): Device as set forth in claim 4, characterized by the fact that it contains means for bringing the various cables (4) up toward the upper part of the tube (1), more or less in synchronization, as said tube fills up.

14. (new): Device as set forth in claim 4, characterized by the fact that it comprises more than one of said cable or similar device suspended vertically in the tube.